

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 5098

NODIS

FOR ATHERTON FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, JO, US

SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING ABOUT AIR DEFENSE

REF: AMMAN 5096

1. SUMMARY. I PROVIDED KING WITH A LONG REPORT ON THE PRESENT SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO THE AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT SALE AND ALSO COVERED WHAT HAD BEEN GOING ON THE LAST WEEK AND A HALF IN WASHINGTON. IN TURN HE NOTED HIS WILLINGNESS TO GO AHEAD WITH A 40-DAY PROCEDURAL DELAY, POINTED AGAIN TO THE GREAT SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SALE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND THE ARAB WORLD AND SAID THAT WHILE THE DELIVERY SCHEDULE FOR THE WEAPONS CAUSED HIM SOME PROBLEMS, HE WOULD NOT WANT TO SEE THAT IN ANY WAY INTERFERE WITH OUR EFFORTS TO GET THE SALE THROUGH CONGRESS. THE KING APPEARS TO BE UNDER VERY CONSIDERABLE STRAIN AND IS CLEARLY MORE DISTURBED BY WHAT HAS HAPPENED THAT WITH ANY OTHER EVENT THAT I CAN RECALL SINCE COMING HERE OVER A YEAR AGO. END SUMMARY.

2. I SAW KING HUSSEIN AT NOON ON JULY 28 TO REPORT TO HIM ON DEVELOPMENTS IN WASHINGTON ON THE CONGRESSIONAL CONSIDERATION OF AIR DEFENSE. I OPENED CONVERSATION IN WHICH I DID MOST OF THE TALKING BY EXPLAINING

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TO HIM EXECUTIVE BRANCH'S COMMITMENT TO THE

SALE AND REVIEWED FOR HIM THE EXTENSIVE ARGUMENTS WHICH WE HAD MADE TO THE CONGRESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SALE, AND OF THE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON US-JORDANIAN RELATIONS AND OUR RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST IF THE SALE SHOULD FALL THROUGH.

3. I FOLLOWED THIS BY TELLING HIM ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE CONGRESS AT THE MOMENT, RELATING THIS TO THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE TO HIM DELIVERED IN TEHRAN. I POINTED UP TO HIM THE REQUEST OF THE SENATORS WHO ARE HIS FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS IN THE COMMITTEE IN SEEKING MORE TIME AND OUR CONSIDERED VIEW THAT THIS WAS THE SORT OF PROCEDURAL ISSUE ON WHICH WE COULD BE ACCOMMODATING, BOTH IN OUR OWN AND THE CONGRESS' INTERESTS. I MADE CLEAR TO HIM THAT IT HAD BEEN VERY TOUGH SLEDDING IN WASHINGTON BUT THAT WE THOUGHT THERE WERE REASONABLE CHANCES FOR IMPROVED CLIMATE OVER THE CONGRESSIONAL RECESS PERIOD. I PROVIDED HIM GENERAL INFORMATION ALONG SAME LINES AS DISCUSSED EARLIER WITH RIFAI ABOUT PERSONALLY BEING MORE OPTIMISTIC ON THE CHANCES FOR A NEXT STEP IN THE DAYS AHEAD.

4. I THEN OUTLINED FOR HIM SOME OF THE BACKGROUND ON THE CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES, INCLUDING EXPLAINING TO HIM THE CONJUNCTION BETWEEN THE OPPOSITION TO THE SALE ON THE PART OF ISRAEL AND ISRAEL'S SUPPORTERS IN THE CONGRESS ON THE ONE HAND AND THOSE IN THE CONGRESS WHO FAVORED INCREASED CONGRESSIONAL CONTROL OVER WEAPONS SALES AND MANY WHO WERE OPPOSED TO THE INCREASING SHIPMENT OF ARMS TO THE MIDDLE EAST ON THE OTHER. I SAID THAT WHILE WE COULD NOT TALK OF VICTORIES ON PROGRESS TO DATE, THE FACT THAT THE CONSENSUS HAD DEVELOPED IN THE COMMITTEE ABOUT NEEDING MORE TIME WAS NOT AN UNFAVORABLE DECISION FOR HIS AND OUR POINT OF VIEW.

5. WITH NO DIRECT ALLUSION TO RIFAI'S CONCERN ABOUT THE MESSAGES WHICH WE HAD EXCHANGED OVER THE LAST WEEK, I TOLD THE KING THAT I MUST APOLOGIZE IF WE
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MAY NOT HAVE SEEN TO ALL THE NICETIES IN OUR EFFORT TO BE COMPLETELY FRANK AND REALISTIC WITH HIM. WE APPRECIATED AS WELL HIS COMPLETE FRANKNESS WITH US. I ADDED THAT WHATEVER DEVELOPS IN THE FUTURE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP, AND I HOPED THAT IT WOULD BE GOOD, IF WE COULD NOT BE COMPLETELY FRANK WE WOULD SURELY LOSE ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT AND TANGIBLE ASPECTS OF OUR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CLOSE COOPERATION.

I STRESSED AGAIN FOR HIM THAT WE HAD MADE COMPLETELY CLEAR TO CONGRESS THAT WE COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT HUMILATE JORDAN AND ITS LEADERS, NOR COULD WE ASK THE KING TO PROVE HIMSELF TO THE U.S.

6. KING REPLIED IN QUIET AND CAREFUL MANNER. HE WAS EXTEEMELY KIND ABOUT AND GRATEFUL FOR ALL THE SUPPORT WHICH THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH HAD GIVEN HIS REQUEST AND ALSO FOR THE HELP OF HIS FRIENDS IN THE CONGRESS. HE INDICATED HE PLANNED TO BE IN TOUCH WITH THEM DIRECTLY AND PERSONALLY AND ASKED ALSO FOR MY PERSONAL ADVICE ON OTHERS WITH WHOM HE MIGHT COMMUNICATE ABOUT THE SALE WHICH I

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FOR ATHERTON FROM AMBASSADOR

TOLD HIM I WOULD PASS ON. HE SAID AGAIN THAT WE ARE REALLY AT THE CROSS-ROADS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP AND STRESSED HOW MUCH HE HOPES HE CAN CONTINUE IN THE SAME WAY THAT WE HAVE IN THE PAST, BUT THAT THE SALE IS THE KEY ISSUE FOR HIM. HE NOTED FRANKLY THAT THINGS HAD CHANGED A GREAT DEAL FROM 1973 AND HE SAID HE HAD TO WONDER WHETHER HE COULD COUNT ON US IF IT CAME TO A REAL CRUNCH IN THE MIDDLE EAST AS HE HAD IN 1971 AND 1973. TO OFFSET THIS SITUATION WHICH HE SEES DEVELOPING, THROUGH NO FAULT OF THE US EXECUTIVE BRANCH, HE REQUIRES AND WANTS TO BE STRONG HIMSELF SO HE NEVER HAS TO CALL ON US FOR ASSISTANCE AS HE DID IN THE PAST. ALL OF THIS TURNS ON HIS NEED FOR THE AIR DEFENSE

EQUIPMENT WHICH WE HAVE AGREED TO PROVIDE AND HE WANTS US UNDER NO DOUBTS ABOUT THE NEED TO GO ELSEWHERE IF HE CANNOT GET IT FROM US. HE SIMPLY HAS NO OTHER CHOICES IN LIGHT OF THE NEED TO DEFEND HIS COUNTRY AGAINST ATTACK AND TO DETER OTHERS FROM TAKING HIS DEFENSE POSTURE AND MODERATION AS WEAKNESS OR SIGNS OF WEAKNESS ON HIS PART.

7. HE TOLD ME, AS RIFAI HAD, THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN IN TO SEE HIM. HE SAID: "THEY DON'T SEEM TO WASTE MUCH TIME, DO THEY?" HE SAID THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR BUBBLED TELLING HIM ABOUT HOW PLEASED THE USSR WAS ABOUT RECENT
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DEVELOPMENTS IN JORDANIAN-US RELATIONS AND COULD HE AND THE SOVIET UNION BE OF ANY HELP? THE KING TOLD HIM THAT THERE WAS NOTHING COULD DO AND SENT HIM ON HIS WAY.

8. THE KING SAID THAT THE 40 DAYS IS O.K. WITH HIM. WE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO SEE THAT THE SITUATION IS GIVEN ENOUGH TIME TO WORK ITSELF OUT. HE URGED HOWEVER, AS DID RIFAI, THAT HE BE GIVEN AN ANSWER AT THE END OF THE 40 DAYS.

9. HE ADDED THAT HE AND RIFAI HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT SURPRISED ABOUT THE DELIVERY SCHEDULE. HE SAID: I DON'T WANT ANY THING ON THIS POINT TO BE CONSTRUED AS BEING UNGRATEFUL OR THAT WE ARE PUSHING UNDULY FOR SOME RECONSIDERATION. OUR FIRST AND ABSOLUTE PRIORITY IS TO GET THE SALE THROUGH. AFTER THAT WE WANT TO TALK AS FRIENDS ABOUT THE DELIVERY SCHEDULES, BUT THE LATTER IS SECONDARY AND YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT OUR INQUIRY ABOUT THIS SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS IN ANY WAY BEING UNGRATEFUL OR TENDING TO DISTURB OR OFFSET OUR PREVIOUS UNDERSTANDINGS. IT IS A SECONDARY DETAIL ON WHICH WE WANT TO RESERVE OUR RIGHT TO SPEAK WITH YOU FURTHER. IN REPLY I SAID THIS WAS UNDERSTOOD ON MY PART AND I WOULD MAKE IT COMPLETELY CLEAR TO WASHINGTON.

10. COMMENT: THE KING WAS FRIENDLY, BUT QUIET AND RESERVED AND FROM MY PAST OBSERVATIONS UNDER MORE STRAIN AND TENSION THAN I HAVE SEEN HIM FOR A VERY LONG PERIOD OF TIME. HE IS ALSO GAINING WEIGHT AND THAT'S NOT A GOOD SIGN WHEN IT COMES TO ASSESSING HIS OWN MOOD OR REACTION. HIS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND MENTAL OUTLOOK LEAD ME TO BELIEVE THAT HE HAS

BEEN UNDER EXTRAORDINARY TENSION AND STRAIN THESE
LAST FEW WEEKS AND THAT OUR PROBLEM HAS BEEN THE
PRINCIPAL CAUSE. I AM CONVINCED THAT HE IS
COMPLETELY WRAPPED UP IN THIS QUESTION AND WHEN HE
SAYS WE ARE AT A VERY SIGNIFICANT CRUNCH POINT,
HE MEANS IT. HIS DESCRIBING OF HIS TALK WITH THE
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SOVIETS LEADS ME TO CONCLUDE FOR HIM IT IS
CLEARLY THE MOST UNPALATABLE OF ALTERNATIVES AND
HE IS NOT VERY HAPPY ABOUT HAVING TO TELL US HE
IS PREPARED TO BUY FROM THAT SOURCE. NEVERTHELESS,
HE DOES NOT SAY THESE THINGS LIGHTLY AND ONCE
COMMITTED TENDS TO GET DUG IN. HE ALSO, I BELIEVE,
IS FEELING A LITTLE BIT BETRAYED BY SOME OF THOSE
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS WITH WHOM HE HAS MET IN THE PAST
AND WHO HAVE INDICATED SENSITIVE SYMPATHY TO HIM,
JORDAN AND HIS PROBLEMS, FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS VISITED
US AND TALKED WITH THE CONGRESS AT LEAST ONCE AND
SOMETIMES TWICE A YEAR FOR SEVERAL DECADES AND
WHERE THE CONGRESS HAS NEVER INDICATED EITHER OPENLY
OR PRIVATELY ANY OPPOSITION TO HIM AND WHAT HE
STANDS FOR, THE MERE FACT OF THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN
IS A SIGNIFICANT BLOW. FINALLY, HE HAS A MORE
IN-SORROW THAN IN-ANGER ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ISRAELIS.
HE DOES NOT, HE SAYS, SEE HOW IT SERVES THEIR
INTERESTS TO BE SO MALEVOLENT, YET HE DOES NOT
ALSO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY SEEM TO HAVE LOST THEIR
USUAL MODERATE PERSPECTIVE TOWARD HIM AND WHAT HE
STANDS FOR IN THE ARAB WORLD. WHILE HE DID NOT
DIRECTLY, I SURMISE FROM WHAT HE DID SAY THAT
HE IS DEEPLY SHAKEN IN HIS PRIOR SENSE
OF SOME CONFIDENCE THAT ALL OF HIS PAST EFFORTS
OVER THE YEARS TO BE MODERATE, UNDERSTANDING, AND
EVEN SOMEWHAT COOPERATIVE AT GRAVE RISK TO HIS
OWN LIFE AND HIS COUNTRY'S EXISTENCE IN THE ARAB
WORLD, IS NOW REQUESTED BY WHAT HE CAN ONLY SEE
AS AN ALL-OUT ATTACK ON HIS DEFENSE NEEDS IN THE
CONGRESS ORCHESTRATED BY THE ISRAELIS. HE FURTHER MENTIONED HIS
DISAPPOINTMENT --
IT WOULD BE DEEPLY OUT OF CHARACTER TO SAY ANYTHING
STRONGER -- WITH THE FACT THAT IT APPEARED THE
U.S. CONGRESS WAS SO DRAMATICALLY BEHOLDEN TO
ISRAELI INTERESTS AND TO HIS LIGHTS SO AGAINST
US SELF-INTEREST ON THIS QUESTION. END COMMENT.
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